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Message Text

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ACTION LAB-04

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07
INR-07 NSAE-00 SIL-01 OIC-02 L-03 /044 W
----------102255Z 123077 /13
P R 101900Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4745
INFO USMISSION GENEVA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 3851

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PLAB ILO CI
SUBJ: ILO - 63RD INTERNATIONAL LABOR CONFERENCE (ILC): CRITICAL ISSUE
S

REF: STATE 102699, 103404, 104945

1. SUMMARY: I TOOK THE OCCASION OF MY FAREWELL CALL ON LABOR MINISTER SERGIO FERNANDEZ TO RAISE ISSUES COVERED IN REFTELS, NOTABLY MEANS TO AVOID U.S. WITHDRAWAL FROM ILO. WE ARE NOT APPROACHING FOREIGN OFFICE, AS IT HAS VIRTUALLY NOTHING TO SAY WITH RESPECT TO ILO MATTERS. DURING MEETING FERNANDEZ ALSO DISCUSSED THE FUTURE OF LABOR ORGANIZATIONS IN CHILE UNDER THE JUNTA. HE HOPES TO SEE THEM DEVELOP IN A DIRECTION NOT DISSIMILAR TO WHAT WE HAVE IN U.S.: AN INDEPENDENT LABOR MOVEMENT NOT LINKED TO ANY POLITICAL PARTY. END SUMMARY.

2. AFTERNOON MAY 9 I CALLED ON LABOR MINISTER SERGIO FERNANDEZ TO SAY GOODBYE AND TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO RUN OVER WITH HIM POINTS MADE IN REFTELS. LABOR ATTACHE ARCHER WILL DELIVER SPANISH TALKING POINTS AS SOON AS RECEIVED HERE AND WILL CARRY ON DETAILED DISCUSSION WITH COSTA, LABOR VICE MINISTER, AND HEAD OF ILO DELEGATION.

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3. FERNANDEZ HAD NO DIFFICULTY AT ALL IN GOING ALONG WITH US ON THE CRITICAL ISSUES CONTAINED STATE 104945. HE DID NOT WISH TO BE DRAWN INTO DETAIL BUT ASSURED US THAT, AS WE HAD BELIEVED, NO ONE COULD BE MORE STRONGLY OPPOSED TO THE POLITICIZATION OF THE ILO THAN CHILE, WHICH HAD BEEN THE SUBJECT OF AN ILO INVESTIGATION AND WHICH, IN ILO AS IN OTHER AGENCIES, HAD NOT HAD FAIR

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TREATMENT.

4. FERNANDEZ SAID GOC IS ALL FOR PRESERVATION OF ILO'S TRIPARTITE STRUCTURE. NATURALLY, HE IS STRONG FOR LIMITATION OF ILO ACTIVITIES TO THEIR PROPER SPHERE, AND FOR EQUAL TREATMENT TO ALL. HE WAS NONCOMMITTAL REGARDING CHANGES IN ILO STRUCTURE BUT UNDERSTOOD OUR DESIRE FOR FULL CONSULTATION RATHER THAN CONFRONTATION. DID NOT REACT TO DISCLOSURE OF OUR SUPPORT FOR MORRIS AS GOVERNING BODY CHAIRMAN.

5. FERNANDEZ MUSED ALOUD AS TO EFFECT OF USG WITH-DRAWAL FROM ILO, SHOULD IT TAKE PLACE. HE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE CATASTROPHIC AND WOULD EVENTUALLY PRECIPITATE WITHDRAWAL BY OTHERS. THIS WOULD LEAVE A VOID, AND TO REPLACE IT HE SUGGESTED THAT, IF THE EVENTUALITY SHOULD ARISE, U.S. SHOULD CONSIDER TRYING TO ORGANIZE AN INTER-AMERICAN AGENCY, ON A TRIPARTITE BASIS, TO FILL IT. I WONDERED HOW SYMPATHETIC A RESPONSE THERE WOULD BE FROM THE LATIN AMERICANS TO SUCH A PROPOSAL. THERE WOULD BE DIFFICULTIES, HE THOUGHT, BUT THEY WOULD NOT BE INSUPERABLE.

6. PRIOR TO THIS DISCUSSION, I HAD EXPRESSED TO FERNANDEZ MY HOPE THAT IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE FOR CHILEAN TRADE UNIONS TO REGAIN THEIR INDEPENDENCE. IF THIS SHOULD HAPPEN, THERE WOULD BE A BASIS FOR COOPERATION WITH AMERICAN LABOR UNIONS, SINCE IN CHILE AS WELL AS IN THE U.S. UNIONS WERE NOW EXPECTED TO AVOID AFFILIATION WITH INDIVIDUAL POLITICAL PARTIES AND TO EXERCISE THEIR INFLUENCE ON CONFIDENTIAL

GOVERNMENT FROM OUTSIDE THE PARTY STRUCTURE.

7. FERNANDEZ AGREED, BUT SAID IT WAS TOO MUCH TO EXPECT THAT CHILEAN TRADE UNIONS COULD REACH THIS POSITION IMMEDIATELY. HISTORICALLY, THEY HAD BEEN TOO CLOSELY LINKED WITH PARTISAN POLITUCAL ACTIVITY. NEVERTHELESS, HE HOPED THAT THE TIME WOULD COME WHEN CHILEAN UNIONS WOULD NO LONGER BE UNDER GOVERNMENT CONTROL AND WOULD FULLY EXERCISE THEIR TRADE UNION RIGHTS, INCLUDING THE RIGHT TO STRIKE FOR SUBSTANTIAL BREAD-AND-BUTTER REASONS. THE TRIPARTITE COMMISSIONS THE GOC HAD SET UP WERE A FIRST STEP IN THE DIRECTION OF RESTORING LABOR'S VOICE AS REGARDS WORKING CONDITIONS. HE HOPED THAT GRADUALLY GOVERNMENT COULD FADE OUT OF THE EQUATION AND THAT RESPONSIBLE COLLECTIVE BARGAINING OF THE TYPE WHICH EXISTED IN THE U.S. COULD DEVELOP IN CHILE.

8. I SAID I WAS SURE THAT MOVEMENT IN THIS DIRECTION WOULD BE WELCOMED IN AMERICAN TRADE UNION CIRCLES AND BY

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AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION. SAID I HOPED THIS OBJECTIVE
WOULD BE EXPLORED IN A SUITABLE PUBLIC DECLARATION,
SO THAT IT COULD BE ADEQUATELY DISSEMINATED IN OTHER COUNTRIES.
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